538 [177] Folk tales are usually more international in character than the songs. Two streams of tales have collided in Estonia: Russian and German, the latter distinctly dominating. There is an abundance of tales dealing with magical themes, but relatively few historical and animal tales. Kreutzwald[1] made popular the German Reinecke Fuchs tales (Reinuvader rebane). Tales of orphans and cross stepmothers are well-known. Despite the hardships of slavery to which the Estonians have been subjected, there are a lot of humorous tales, among them the very popular tales of the Shrewd Ants and the Old Headen (Kaval Ants ja Vanapagan), in which Vanapagan is a dupe with great physical power whom Ants always outsmarts. Many types of people are targets of folk humor; stingy and lazy persons, tailors, soldiers, students and

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1[See cat. 116, p. 155-- -165- Analyst]

538 professors, nobles, Setus, gypsies, Jews and
[522]
city people. Many tales explain the origin of rivers, lakes, hills, swamps, and forests and the creation of certain animals.

177 Folk religion. Of special interest is Estonian
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folk religion. The geographical situation of Estonia has encouraged numerous borrowings in folk religion from Goth, German, Swede, Russian and Baltic neighbors. At present, more research is needed to differentiate between the original and borrowed elements. German influence appears to be the most overwhelming, and can be traced in almost any type of belief. These beliefs are used today more as literary and artistic subjects than as real superstitions or beliefs in everyday life.

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